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CHAPTER XX.

Kenton made no reply to Steve Brantley's inquiry, but the latter noticed a look on the young man's face he had never seen there before. The Virginian by adoption had pursued the course he thought was right. He had done his duty under all circumstances and had been thoroughly loyal to the cause which he espoused. Those beside whom he fought had made every attempt to degrade and disgrace him and drive him out of the service. If he had not enlisted, he would have been called a traitor and driven away from his home with bodily injury. He had joined the ranks to be respected and honored. As the cause now stood he could not leave the southern cause without being returned on the rolls as a deserter. If exchanged, he would be put on trial, and he realized that enough influence could be brought to bear to further disgrace him.

"Look yere, Yank, what's botherin' yo' head?" asked Steve after a few minutes of silence.

"A good many things," was the reply.

"I've been fidgetin' a bit. Both Captain Wyle and the major are now down on yo'. If yo' ever gets back to the Confederacy, they'll shet yo' up or shoot yo'. Can't yo' see it?"

"It looks that way to me."

"The Yanks may keep us six months, and dooin that time thar's goin to be a heap of lyin about yo' to that gal. She'll be told that yo' deserted or maybe that yo' are dead. Yo' kin bet Captain Wyle won't let no grass grow under his feet. I've heard that she was over in the mountains."

"Yes."

"And I was told that Captain Wyle and his critter company had bin sent back yere to help hold the Yankees. Can't yo' see?"

"Yes, but I can't act."

"Why not? It's comin on dark, and it's goin to rain. See how the line has straggled! Them blacocks hain't got more'n one eye open. Tell yo' what my plan is. Let's make a dash for it! If hain't over 30 miles to whar yo' gal is. Go'n see her. She's powerful level headed, and I reckon she may give yo' some good advice. Yo'll hev a show to explain things anyway, and that will make dooin of the captain's cake."

"And what about yo'?" asked Kenton.

"Waal, I'd just as lief run up thar with yo'. I ain't just exactly satisfied about all this thing. Mebbe I'll surrender to the Yanks agin, and mebbe I'll go back to the company and let the major write it on and be hanged to him. I want a day or two to think it over. What do yo' say?"

"I'm agreed," replied Kenton after a moment's thought.

"That's bizness! Just about 40 rods down yere I'll give yo' the word. We uns will break for them woods to the right. We'll be fired on and mebbe killed, but we've got to take chances. Once we reach the woods we are safe."

The afternoon was rapidly fading into dusk, and a fine rain had begun to fall. The cavalrymen were strung out so that there were gaps of several feet between horses, and as the prisoners were singing songs and seemed in good spirits the vigilance of the captors was naturally relaxed. The wall which inclosed the field on the right suddenly ended, and then came a field which was open because the fencing had been used by soldiers from one side or the other for their campfires. It was a distance of about 30 rods to the edge of the woods, and it was likely they would not only be fired on, but pursued by some of the troopers. Brantley stepped into the road ahead of Kenton, increased his pace to reach the center of a gap between two horsemen and suddenly threw up his hand as a signal.

Both men were well into the field and running at the top of their speed before an alarm was raised. Three or four of the troopers on that side opened fire with their carbines, but pursuit was prevented by a dozen other prisoners evincing a disposition to also make a bolt. Some of the half dozen bullets came unpleasantly near, but not one struck the fugitives, and in two or three minutes they were safe in the woods. With darkness already at hand, there was no fear of pursuit.

"Yank, we uns did that as neat as a bar backin down a bee tree!" said Steve as they stopped to recover their breath and shake hands.

"And now what?" asked Kenton.

"Now for the mountains. Reckon we'd best put on steam and git out o' this locality as soon as possible. I know this ground and will lead the way."

Stopping to rest for a few minutes every hour or so, the pair held their course for the Alleghenies and about 3 o'clock in the morning turned into a ricket among the foothills to rest and sleep. It was still raining, and the night was raw and cold, but they crept into the thick bushes and were soon fast asleep. It was 8 o'clock before they opened their eyes and then only because disturbed by a great clatter on the highway only a few yards distant. Brantley was the first to move forward and make an investigation. He returned in four or five minutes to say:

"I can't just make 'em out. Thar's about a hundred men, and all on critters, and the hull heep are southerners, but only a few are in uniform. They can't be recruits goin to the army, because they are goin the wrong way."

"It may be a Confederate raiding or scouting party," suggested Kenton.

"Mebbe so, but we uns don't want nuthin to do with 'em. Hang me if they hain't a billions lookin lot!"

The fugitives waited for a quarter of an hour after the last hoof beats had died away and then stole out into the highway. The rain had ceased, but it was a lowering morning, and they were sharp set for breakfast. The log house of a farmer was plain to view a quarter of a mile down the road, and they made sure they would find something

to eat there. In a few words they agreed on the story they were to tell if questioned, and 10 minutes later they were at the door of the house. It was opened to them by the farmer's wife. She was a strong advocate of the southern cause, and the sight of their Confederate uniforms brought a cheerful invitation to enter and sit down to breakfast.

"Don't you uns belong with that crowd which just passed up the road?" she asked as they fell to eating.

Steve Brantley took it upon himself to answer in the negative and then asked what crowd it was.

"It's Kurnel Mosby and his gang. They hain't much on the fight, I reckon, but they do pester the Yankees like all git out."

Most of 'em are farmers, and some of 'em live around yere. Whar did you uns cum from?"

Steve told her of the fight with Custer and their escape the night before, and she lifted her hands and cried out:

"Then you uns dun seen the Yankees?"

"Yes'm."

"Reg'lar live Yankee sogers?"

"Yes'm."

"And yo' got away alive?"

"Of co'se."

"Waal, I wouldn't 'a' believed it! Mrs. Sam Duncan dun tole me them Yankees killed everybody with tomahawks as soon as they got holt of 'em! Yo' uns must hev bin powerful cute to git away."

Breakfast had been finished when there came a knock at the door, and next moment a man in the uniform of a Confederate cavalry sergeant entered the cabin. He had been sent back by Colonel Mosby, he said, to ask for the loan of a horse and equipments. He used the term "loan," but it was pretty plain that he meant to take no refusal. The woman replied that her husband had set out for Woodstock the night before on horseback, and therefore it was impossible to grant the colonel's request. The sergeant was going away without a word to our two friends, but after reaching his horse he returned and asked:

"What command do you fellers belong to?"

"To Captain Wyle's cavalry company," replied Kenton.

"Where is it?"

"I don't know."

"Humph! Whar yo' goin'?"

"None of yo'r bizness!" answered Steve, who had been rolled by the sergeant's supercilious airs and lofty tone.

"Oh, it hain't, eh? Mebbe yo've got a pass in yo'r pocket to allow of yo'r rambling around the Kentry? If so, I'll take a look at it."

"Yo' hain't big enough!"

"What! Now you uns either show a pass, or I'll take yo' along to Kurnel Mosby! He'll mighty soon find out whar yo' belongs!"

"You see," began Kenton, who, realizing that it was foolish to arouse the man's anger and suspicion, "we were guarding the stores at Harrisonburg, and the Federal cavalry came in yesterday and..."

"Whar's yo'r pass?" interrupted the sergeant.

"Whar's yo'r?" demanded Steve.

"Show yo'r pass, or I'll take yo' to the kurnel!"

"I should like to explain the case to you," said Kenton, motioning to Steve not to interrupt him. "We are Confederate soldiers. We were captured at Harrisonburg by the Federal's yesterday forenoon, but escaped at dark last night. Therefore we have no pass and do not need a pass."

"Yo' may be all right, and yo' may be a couple of Yankee spies!" replied the sergeant. "If yo' are straight, yo'll come along with me and explain to the kurnel. Deed, but yo've got to come, straight or crooked!"

He had left his revolver and carbine on the saddle. He started for his horse, but Steve was there before him. He had stepped softly out while Kenton was explaining and was now in possession of both firearms and a supply of ammunition. Even as the trooper reached the gate Steve gave his horse a slap and sent him galloping away and then turned and asked:

"Who's takin anybody to see the kurnel? Sorter 'pears to me that yo've dun stubbed yo'r toe and fell down!"

The sergeant very quietly asked what he was going to do, and his manner betrayed his anxiety.

"Goin to git shet of yo' about the fust thing!" answered Steve. "Left face! Forward march! Keep goin right down the road till yo' find the kurnel and then give him our love!"

The trooper marched away without a backward look, and when he was lost to sight by a turn in the road Kenton said:

"Steve, you did a bad thing for us. That whole crowd will be after us inside of a hour."

"Don't holler befo' yo'r hit, Yank!" laughed Steve. "If we uns hadn't taken him, he'd hev taken us, and besides that it suddenly occurred to me that we'd got to hev something to shoot with. Now, then, let's be a-gettin straight up the mountain."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

WORTH IT.

Some picture dealers, as well as certain art critics, have a scent for merit which may be compared to a dog's "nose" in hunting. T. Sidney Cooper, the English artist, gives such an instance of a dealer who could trust his own intuition without seeing the picture.

On a valiant day I was busy in touching up one of my pictures, when Turner passed me, palette in hand. He stopped to look at the canvas, and then, saying, "I don't like it, it destroys the beauty," he laid a dab of color over the part on which I had been working. He walked away disdainfully. Another artist saw him do it and immediately said:

"Don't touch it again. He has done in one moment all that is wanted."

So I left it, and when Turner passed again, I went up to him and thanked him, because he had not only given me a sort of grant, but vouchsafed never a word.

That afternoon I met Gillott among other dealers, who at once began asking me about my pictures. I told him that they were well hung, and then mentioned the fact that Turner had put a touch on my "Walden" scene.

"What is the size and price of the picture?" asked Mr. Gillott, I told him.

"And did the great Turner really touch upon it, as you say?"

"Yes, he did."

"Then the picture is mine," I remarked.

"No matter," Turner would never have touched it if it had not been worth it. The picture is mine at £200, so cross it 'old."

Popular Ignorance About Health.

There is appalling popular ignorance of the structure and functions of the human body. People may be seen violating the primary conditions of health without even the compensations of pleasure, and asking the loss of sight, hearing or locomotion: eating and drinking to reckless disregard of common sense. There is a good deal of popular ignorance on the subject of exercise; for instance, some people foolishly take long walks after heavy meals with the absurd notion of "settling their dinner."

Let them learn from the intelligent dog or the learned cat or the well informed cow, who knows enough to rest after a meal. Doctors make lots of money out of the unpardonable ignorance of some people, who do not think it worth while to learn the simplest rules as to how to care for themselves.—New York Sun.

Vandalism in Georgia Forests.

The long leaf pine belt of Georgia covers more than one-half of the counties of the state. Well managed it would yield, it is estimated, \$30,000,000 a year, but is being recklessly destroyed by the turpentine farmers. It is claimed that 40 per cent of the pine now standing has been killed. There are now in operation, it is said, stills enough to sap the remainder of the timber in seven years, and all this for the price of 75 cents to \$1 an acre, which gives \$5,000,000 for the destruction of forests which in fifteen years of good husbandry would have yielded \$100,000,000 in lumber and naval stores without diminution of their own productivity.—Atlanta Constitution.

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